Towards a Long-term Place Biography of Nahr el-Kalb (Lebanon)

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Summary: Towards a Long-term Place Biography of Nahr el-Kalb (Lebanon)

At the mouth of the Nahr el-Kalb, a river flowing into the Mediterranean some kilometers north of the Lebanese capital of Beirut, the visitor can find more than twenty rock-cut monuments, perfectly integrated in the surrounding anthropic and natural landscape, that are dated between the thirteenth century BCE and the dawn of the twenty-first century CE. In a privileged geographical emplacement, with breath-taking beauty and strategic character, kings and rulers, both local and foreign, left their inscriptions and stelae to celebrate their military achievements and to mark the endurance of their deeds. These monuments make Nahr el-Kalb a unique place to study how imperial power found its material expression, and how the symbolic and ritual aspects play a significant role in the configuration of this peerless open-air museum.

Keywords: Nahr el-Kalb – Monuments – Empires – Ancient Near East – Rituals

Resumen: Hacia una biografía a largo plazo de Nahr el-Kalb (Líbano)

En la desembocadura del Nahr el-Kalb, a algunos kilómetros al norte de la capital libanesa de Beirut, el visitante puede encontrar más de veinte monumentos excavados en la roca, perfectamente integrados en el paisaje antrópico y natural circundante. Los monumentos tienen una cronología de entre el siglo XIII a.C. y los albores del siglo XXI. En un emplazamiento geográfico privilegiado, con una belleza impresionante y un carácter estratégico, reyes y gobernantes, tanto locales como extranjeros, dejaron sus inscripciones y estelas para celebrar logros militares. Estos monumentos hacen de Nahr el-Kalb un lugar único para estudiar cómo el poder imperial encontró su expre-

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sión material, y cómo los aspectos simbólicos y rituales juegan un papel importante en la configuración de este incomparable museo al aire libre.

Palabras clave: Nahr el-Kalb – Monumentos – Imperios – Próximo Oriente Antiguo – Rituales

The monumental ensemble of Nahr el-Kalb is located at the mouth of the homonymous river, along Highway 51, which runs parallel to the coast from Beirut to El Aarida on the Syrian border (**Fig. 1**). Twelve km north of the Lebanese capital and slightly south of the bustling city of Jounieh, it is hard to miss the rock-cut monuments when driving along the coast. At the same time, the site is perfectly integrated in the anthropic and natural landscape and it forms a cohesive unit with the river, the coast-line, the two promontories on each side of the river and the frantic traffic of the roads.[1]

Here, and particularly on the southern promontory called Ras el-Kalb, the visitor finds 22 monuments dated between the thirteenth century BCE (the oldest) and the dawn of the twenty-first century CE (the last monument dates to the year 2000). More than thirty-three centuries of events are recorded in the carved rocks at the mouth of the Nahr el-Kalb.[2] The great Ramses II inaugurated the tradition of monument making at the site, when he carved the first of his three reliefs in the fourth year of his successful reign (1275/1274 BCE), transforming the mouth of the river into a place of remembrance, display of imperial power and colonial metaphors. The Egyptian pharaoh chose an impressive location on the coastal route from Egypt towards the north of the Levant, marking, in both a symbolic and a material way, both the current frontier of his dominions and the limes he was aspiring to create.[3] Yet, the place was far from being neutral, or pristine, at the time of the arrival of the Egyptian army, as C. Yazbeck has demonstrated in her study of the prehistoric remains in the cave of Ras el-Kalb; there, archaeologists have documented seasonal occupation at different time

[1] Maïla-Afeiche 2009: 17 fig. 6.
[2] Maïla-Afeiche 2009.
[3] Loffet 2009.



Fig. 1. Map of Lebanon with location of Nahr el-Kalb.

points during the Middle Palaeolithic period, as well as some scattered remains dated to the Neolithic, Chalcolithic and Bronze Age.[4] But the most impressive remains at the site are of course the rock-cut monuments, where kings and rulers, both local and foreign, commissioned inscriptions and stelae to celebrate their military achievements and to shore up their power and to mark the endurance of their deeds. The inscriptions are drafted in a great assortment of languages and writing systems, and some even appear decorated with impressive reliefs; the variety in chronology, workmanship and function of the stelae turns this exceptional natural landscape into a powerful and enduring master class in Near Eastern history.[5]

The privileged geographical emplacement, its breathtaking beauty and strategic character, and the symbolic and ritual value of the site have all played a role in the configuration of this peerless open-air museum. But tradition, mimetism and dialectic confrontation between rulers and powers over the ages have also played a significant role in the making and remaking of this unique emplacement.

Boxed between the sea and the mountains, the Ras el-Kalb, together with the capes of Ras ach-Chaqaa (the Greek Theouprosopon), Bayyada and Naqoura create a series of practically unpassable barriers along the coastal route of the Lebanon, the Via Maris.[6] The impressive development of the modern highway systems has made communication much easier, but at the same time hinders the appreciation of the difficulties for transportation in pre-modern societies and of the symbolic challenge that the insurmountability of the passes must have posed to the ancient travellers.

The abrupt geology of the mouth of the Nahr el-Kalb creates a frontier and, at the same time, a place of passage. It is an inhospitable spot, but also an emplacement of collective social memory. A contested station in a dramatic geographical setting, over the millennia the mouth of the Nahr el-Kalb has formed a natural pass in the central Levantine coast. This dichotomy of untamed nature and monumentalized cultural

[4] Yazbeck 2009: 183–193.

[5] Maïla-Afeiche 2009: 37–39.

[6] Sader 2000: 69–72; Stern 2000; Volk 2008.

landscape is one of the most characteristic features of the site and probably one of the main reasons Nahr el-Kalb was selected by so many rulers as the site for their commemorative monuments.

Geological studies undertaken at the site[7] have demonstrated that the natural terraces, formed as a result both of fluctuations in sea level and of episodic tectonic uplift, were the basis for the footpaths and the roads in use over the centuries: from the prehistoric to the Roman periods, the Middle Ages and the modern era.[8] The ample pictorial evidence at our disposal (drawings and, since the twentieth century, photographs) helps us to comprehend the appearance of a landscape which natural phenomena (the modification of the coast-line)[9] and modern human activity (the construction of tunnels, bridges, railways and roads) have altered beyond recognition.[10] The geomorphological configuration of the site dictated the movement of people along the promontories and also played a crucial role in the selection of the individual sites for the monuments. The physical transformations of the site may mislead us; as a starting hypothesis, one might propose that the monuments were made in order to be seen and experienced by the viewer/passer-by,[11] but today's monumental ensemble clearly differs from the site in the past, due to both anthropic and natural modifications.

The precise emplacements of the monuments in the promontories were not only determined by the geological and physical constraints of the site, but also by a deliberate decision to place the stele and inscriptions in visible and symbolic spots. Every new addition to the ensemble had to coexist with the previous monuments and adapt to the space available on the rocks, but each new monument also modified the whole cadre, sometimes even removing or destroying previous works—as when Napoleon III carved his inscription over an existing inscription of Ramses III.[12] The accumulation of monuments at Nahr

[7] Leanderson 2009a; 2009b.
[8] Maïla-Afeiche 2009: 51–54; Leanderson 2009b: 103–120.
[9] Leanderson 2009a: 77–102.
[10] Maïla-Afeiche 2009: 48–66.
[11] Da Riva 2015.
[12] Volk 2009: 328.

el-Kalb has created an increasingly complex choral effect in which new voices have been progressively adjoined to the existing ones in an ever-changing symphony.

The first monuments carved at the site, the Egyptian stelae nos. 14 and 16,[13] have a clear military and political intention: they are linked to Ramses II's campaigns in the 4th, 8th and 10th years of his reign (1275–1259 BCE), and to the international context of Late Bronze Age in the Levant. Despite the deficient state of preservation of the inscriptions, their location confirms the crucial role of the coastal route in the Egyptian military operations, and the iconographic elements that can be distinguished in the reliefs corroborate the symbolic, political and diplomatic character of the stelae.[14]

Some centuries later, the increasing expansionism of the Assyrian monarchs added a new chapter to the history of Nahr el-Kalb. The Mediterranean coastline acquired a crucial role for this inland empire with global aspirations, and at the site of Nahr el-Kalb the dialectic of the political panorama of the last centuries of the second and the first half of the first millennium BCE is reproduced: the Egypto-Assyrian conflicts are reflected and reproduced on the rock surface, in the emplacement of the monuments and in their relative position with regard to the Egyptian stelae. Currently five Assyrian reliefs are preserved at the site, without counting a sixth Assyrian monument that is missing today (no. 8.)[15] They were dated by Boscawen between the reigns of Aššur-reša-iši and Esarhaddon (XII–VII centuries BCE): nos. 6, 7, 13, 15 and 17, but today only no. 17 is sufficiently well preserved to provide unequivocal historical and chronological data.[16]

Drafted at some point during the first decades of the sixth century BCE, Nebuchadnezzar II's inscription at Nahr el-Kalb (no. 1) is the only monument carved on the valley's northern slope.[17] The choice of

[13] There was a third Egyptian stele, but as mentioned above, Napoleon III destroyed it in order to carve his own monument; see Maïla-Afeiche 2009: 30, 43–44.
[14] Loffet 2009: 195–239 and figs. 1–8.
[15] Maïla-Afeiche 2009: 42, 44.
[16] Roche 2009: 241–253 and figs. 1–9.
[17] Da Riva 2009: 255–301 and figs. 1–22.

this site must undoubtedly have had a political and symbolic significance of its own. And, in my opinion, this significance was twofold: on the one hand, the carving of the inscription was the symbolic equivalent on the rock surface of the Neo-Babylonian challenge to the Egyptian presence in the Levant, and also to the Assyrian presence, even if the latter was no longer real.[18] Yet the monument should also be understood in the context of the other Nebuchadnezzar monuments produced all over Lebanon (for instance, Brisa, Shir as-Sanam and Wadi as-Saba) as expressions of the Babylonian imperial presence and the king's aspirations to control the Levant and the coastal routes from Gaza to Syria.[19]

The next set of monuments can be dated between the beginning of third and the end of the fourth centuries CE, and are written in Greek and in Latin: nos. 3, 11 and 12. Emperor Caracalla (211–217 CE) commissioned the carving of the first of these inscriptions, and the most recent monument commemorates work done at the coastal route under Proculus, governor of Palestine and of Phoenicia in the last decades of the fourth century.[20] It is interesting to observe the presence of monuments which do not explicitly memorialize the military or political deeds of the foreign powers in the region, but refer to interventions in the road network. Some inscriptions from this period as well as a series of milestones and boundary marks erected along the Roman road are unfortunately not preserved today.[21]

At the end of the fourteenth century the Mamluk Sultan Barquq left an inscription (no. 2) in front of the southern side of the oldest bridge in Nahr el-Kalb on the occasion of restoration works undertaken there. Yet the significance of the inscription goes beyond the celebration of the works, as it also refers to the promulgation of decrees to protect the population.[22] Other Arabic inscriptions such as the one by the Emir Bechir are no longer preserved.[23]

[18] Da Riva 2010.
[19] Da Riva 2014.
[20] Yon 2009: 303–314 and figs. 1–6.
[21] Maïla-Afeiche 2009: 45; Yon 2009: 310.
[22] Bittar and Lamaa 2009: 315–323 and figs. 1–5.
[23] Maïla-Afeiche 2009: 45–46.

The monuments still visible today at the site date from the beginning of the nineteenth to the very beginning of the twenty-first centuries: nos. 5, 18AB, 9, 10, 4, 19, 20, 21 and 22.[24] Most of these monuments were erected by foreign forces occupying the country, by colonial and invading powers, either in the context of the European imperial expansion of the nineteenth century or during the First and Second World Wars in the Near East, while the most recent ones were commissioned by presidents of the Republic of Lebanon. The majority of these inscriptions are related to military deeds and other key events in the history of modern Lebanon, but some were drafted to commemorate the construction of the Ottoman bridge, the roads and the railway. From the above description it is clear that most of the monuments present at the site are the product of political statements expressed on the rock. The surfaces of the promontory are the symbolic political playing fields in which the history of the region unfolded.

As demonstrated by the privileged emplacement and by the richness and multi-temporality of the monuments present there, Nahr el-Kalb was never completely forgotten, and it did not have to be "discovered." References to the mouth of the river and to its monuments abound in the written and iconographic works of travellers, adventurers, geographers, politicians, pilgrims, scholars and artists of different nationalities, cultures and creeds, and bear witness to the allure of the site over the millennia.[25] There is a history of the site of Nahr el-Kalb that goes beyond the mere history of the monuments carved there, a history that has to do with the long-lasting intellectual engagement with the site. The first references to Nahr el-Kalb, which surprisingly do not mention the rock-cut monuments, come from the work of the ancient classical travellers such as Strabo and Pliny the Elder. A different vision of the Levant is encountered in the work of Arab geographers during the first centuries of the Islam, who stress the site's strategic and economic value. This value is confirmed by the chronicles dated to the times of the Crusades which often stress the physical abruptness and challenging character of the promontories, and by

[24] Maïla-Afeiche 2009: 33–37; Volk 2009: 327–344 and figs. 1–17.
[25] Maïla-Afeiche 2009: 123–157.

the pilgrims who crisscrossed the region between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. Under the Mamluk Sultans, the Nahr el-Kalb was a real administrative border, and chroniclers of the early Modern period mention the river as a frontier between the kingdoms of Jerusalem and Antioch. In fact the river is today the limit between the Keserwan and the Matn Districts in the Mount Lebanon Governorate.

From the middle of the sixteenth century onwards, the number of European travellers to the Levant (pilgrims, merchants, diplomats, soldiers) increased, and with it the amount of sources on the Nahr el-Kalb.[26] The river is a necessary stopover along the coastal route and in addition to the physical difficulty posed by the pass, many travellers mention the presence of the sculpted monuments. Yet the sources are qualitatively uneven, as the interest of the different authors in the monuments varies greatly as well as the level of detail contained in their accounts. Some of the visitors could read and understand the monuments, as the contexts, languages and writing systems were more or less familiar to them, but other inscriptions (such as cuneiform texts or hieroglyphs, which remained undeciphered, simply went unnoticed. At the end of the seventeenth century and during the eighteenth, the travellers begin to show a real scientific curiosity in the monuments and their inscriptions, and tried to contextualize them inside their general knowledge of the remote past of the region. In this period, artists produced the first drawings of the monuments; though not true reproductions of reality, they represent a romantic, free interpretation of the material past. With the development of navigation and the growing importance of the Levant inside the expansionist plans of the Europeans, the number of west European travellers with scientific interest in the Near East increased dramatically in the nineteenth century. For many of them, the Levant, Lebanon or even the site of Nahr el-Kalb represented the main focus of interest in their accounts and publications, which provide us with a rich picture of the monuments existing in the period.[27] These accounts are true products of their time,

[26] Maïla-Afeiche 2009: 123–136.
[27] Maïla-Afeiche 2009: 133–135.

full of romantic ideas about the inscriptions, their setting and the historical context in which their authors believed the monuments had been created. At the same time, artists reproduce the site and the stelae, at the beginning with engravings and, by the end of the nineteenth century, with the first photographs. Despite their idealized and often inaccurate perceptions of the reality, their orientalism, colonial distortion and Eurocentric perspective of the "other,"[28] the value of these accounts and drawings is immense for the reconstruction of the physical setting of the Nahr el-Kalb in the times before civil construction works modified the landscape and destroyed some of the monuments.

The nineteenth century is the foundational period of the scientific and humanistic disciplines as we know them today: philology, philosophy, geology, history, archaeology, geography, Egyptology and Assyriology, among others, and that the stelae of Nahr el-Kalb are among the first documents copied, studied and translated by scholars. This scientific engagement with the monuments culminated in the major studies of the stelae of Nahr el-Kalb published in the first decades of the twentieth century (in fact, before some of the stelae had been erected!), such as the studies by F. H. Weissbach and P. Mouterde.[29] The next comprehensive study of the site was coordinated by A.-M. Maïla-Afeiche of the Direction Générale des Antiquités and published in 2009.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, under the French Mandate, the first interventions were carried out to study *in situ*, manage, catalogue, date, assign a number and protect the monuments. The archives of the Direction Générale des Antiquités are rich in data (reports, plans, sketches, drawings and photographs) regarding these efforts. This process continued until the 1990s with the implementation of several projects, run by the Direction Générale des Antiquités and also by international agencies, to safeguard and enhance the site and to develop a legal framework to ensure the protection of the monuments such as the ALBA and ARTECAD projects.[30] Finally, in 2005, the

[28] See Volk 2009.
[29] Weissbach 1922; Mouterde 1932.
[30] Maïla-Afeiche 2009: 150–151.

Lebanese National Commission of UNESCO proposed the inscription of the commemorative stelae of Nahr el-Kalb in the Memory of the World Register, and the proposal was accepted in the same year.[31]

The complex web of associations between the history of each single monument and the general history of the site bears witness to the monuments' versatility. On the one hand, at "local" level, the monuments are significant for daily users who perform activities associated with the site; and on the other, at "global" level, Nahr el-Kalb becomes part of a broader intervention of both domestic and foreign political elites. By carving their monuments here, these elites increased the significance of the site, transforming it from something local and elemental to something awe-inspiring and universal. At the same time, this entanglement of histories indicates that the monuments are still alive; they are live presences in the contemporary viewer's world, not fossilized remnants of history. Of course, the significance of the monuments changes as the configuration of the emplacement and the value of the setting shifts with time. By means of this mechanism of monument production, the Nahr el-Kalb is continuously being appropriated, used and reused through reconfiguration, addition and destruction.

Through their ever-increasing engagement with the site, the monumental reliefs turn the natural landscape of the mouth of the river into a landscape monument. I understand a "landscape monument" as a culturally significant site that acquires importance for specific human groups through daily experience, practice, performance and remembrance, and through the stories associated with the site. By means of these practices, the sites become assemblages of shared memories, generated and maintained by specific social and symbolic practices.

As our model for understanding this engagement with the monuments, we should dismiss the assumption of the isolated, solitary observer who approaches them from a scientific (archaeological, historical or philological) perspective. This is because, as we have seen,

[31] http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/memory-of-the-world/register/full-list-of-registered-heritage/registered-heritage-page-2/commemorative-stela-of-nahr-el-kalb-mount-lebanon/ (web-page retrieved in May 2018).

the ensemble of Nahr el-Kalb is the product of more than 33 centuries of monument making, and also because each observer has her own background which must be contextualized within the parameters of a given culture, ideology, social position, and so on. At the same time, the performing engagement has to be understood as a multi-sensorial experience of the place, involving all the senses. As argued by Hamilakis in his groundbreaking study,[32] both our culture and our intellectual heritage as scholars promote the visual field at the expense of other sensorial modalities. Since the Renaissance, the western gaze has constructed the past as a world dominated by visual signifiers, in which the elements of the material past (pottery, buildings, stelae) are treated as aesthetic values, chronometric devices, or passive functional categories. As a contrast to this mono-sensorial approach, the archaeology of the senses offers infinite possibilities for addressing multifarious experiences in the study of rock-cut monuments, to re-claim the other sensory devices through which human agents comprehend their world, create and destroy memory, and build social and political relationships, including relationships of power and domination—precisely the ones expressed by these rock-cut monuments.

Studying the monuments from a long-term diachronic perspective as authors like Harmanşah advocate,[33] we should bear in mind the effect of the viewer's cultural, intellectual and social background on her appreciation of the monuments. But we should also take into account factors that are extrinsic to the viewer herself but are determinant in her embodied perception of the monuments, such as the time of day, the season, the outside temperature, or her physical distance from the monument in question.

Considering the multi-sensorial experience of a place like Nahr el-Kalb will make us think about the acoustic effects of monument building. The construction of the monuments and the roads, bridges, railways and highways at the site must have created a loud, continuous noise, with workers and artisans carving the inscriptions and chiselling

[32] Hamilakis 2014.
[33] Harmanşah 2015.

the reliefs, the shouts and cries of a great swarm of people moving from one place to the other, up and downhill; soldiers and officials; travellers and onlookers stopping at the site, chatting and experiencing it with all their senses. Rock monuments are often located close to running water, and the sound of water may also have been an important source of meaning: at Nahr el-Kalb the sea and the river create distinctive sound effects which are crucial for the embodied, sensorial experience and reception of the monuments. And we should also consider the sounds produced in the course of human engagement with the monuments through rituals and ceremonies, such as music and songs, movements in the course of processions of pilgrimages, and so on. Other sensorial aspects to consider are the sense of touch and the sense of position and movement. By exploring the texture and the tactile properties of monuments we see how transforming rock surfaces from rough to smooth and the experience generated in humans through the singular sense of touch are crucial aspects for understanding their production and the people's sensorial engagement with them. Thus, although obviously a visual phenomenon, rock-cut monuments are also linked to sound and to tactility, in terms of both their production and their reception.

Taste and smell would also have been important. Despite the lack of direct references from the texts preserved in the monuments, the possibility that ritual ceremonies were performed at site of Nahr el-Kalb has been suggested since the earlier stages of scientific study. Authors like W. Boscawen argued that the free spaces in front of the Assyrian stele at Nahr el-Kalb might have been used to perform sacrifices, in analogy to the scenes represented at the Balawat gates.[34] The idea was summarized as followed by H. Winckler: "It is assumed that specific sacrificial ceremonies accompanied the inauguration of each monument, based on inscriptions found on other Assyrian monuments."[35] In the course of this ritual interaction, one can presume the

[34] Boscawen 1882: 350–351.
[35] Winckler 1909: 13. On the issue of rites performed on occasion of the inauguration of monuments in the Ancient Near East, see Berlejung 1998; Dick 1999; Walker and Dick 2001; Ambos 2004; Walls 2005.

production of olfactory experiences, the intense smell of incense and other aromatic substances, the often pungent smell of the food offerings, the blood, urine and excrement of the sacrificial animals, and so on, as well as the sensation of taste associated with the consumption of these offerings. And finally, returning to the visual perception of the monuments, we should remember that in Antiquity they would not have been seen as they are seen now, as denuded, clean rock surfaces; some of them would have been painted in vibrant colours and the fading of these colours with the passing of time obviously conditions the way we see them today.

We cannot emphasize strongly enough the agency of rock art in eliciting specific bodily movements by the humans who engaged with it: for example, by dictating the itinerary to follow. Due to their characteristics and physical setting, the monuments of Nahr el-Kalb were, and still are, key elements of bodily performance and movement through the landscape: processions, spectacles, commemorations, pilgrimages, building works and scientific study. In the words of L. Volk:

> *Visiting and contemplating (...) requires climbing to their location on the hill, keeping bodily and cognitive memory closely linked. Memory scholars have been criticized for their preference for texts and textual analysis, so it is important to acknowledge that the act of commemoration at Nahr al-Kalb required (and still requires) strenuous bodily efforts: the physical feeling of accomplishment at having scaled a steep hill accompanied the reading of the victory inscription. Of course, the physical part of the commemoration became easier once more sophisticated roads and bridges were constructed. (...) However, this means that the contemporary visitor has to stand in the narrow valley, looking up at the old inscriptions overhead. Therefore, the landscape in which the*

> *historic texts are embedded plays a significant part in the creation and appreciation of the historic stelae.*[36]

The landscape and the senses find their most obvious physical and symbolic association at Nahr el-Kalb in the role played by water at this particular site. As recently argued by Ö. Harmanşah,

> *(...) landscapes of water (...) are hybrid products of natural and cultural processes. On the one hand, landscapes of water serve as habitats for distinct animal and plant communities, and form resourceful ecologies of dwelling for them. On the other hand, flowing water and bodies of water are essential components of what constitutes a place and what constitutes a sense of belonging to that place.*[37]

The liminal aspect of water played a crucial role in the selection of this emplacement because, in addition to its potential strategic value, its association with ritual purity and physical cleanness, it offered a conduit to the divine.

The Mediterranean is a constant element in the material and symbolic experience of the monuments and their setting, as the particular emplacement of the Nahr el-Kalb stelae was dictated by the physical constraints of the coastal road between the mountains and the sea. The sea, the movements of the shoreline, and the erosion produced by the water has also played a crucial role in the history of the conservation of the stelae, as evidenced during the first evaluations of their condition.[38] Another significant element to consider, both from the physical and from the symbolic point of view, is the river itself. As seen above, over the centuries the Nahr el-Kalb was often a frontier, but the river was never completely impassable due to fluctuations in the sea level and the

[36] Volk 2008: 298.
[37] Harmanşah 2015: 54.
[38] Maïla-Afeiche 2009: 142–149.

coastline and due to the construction of the bridges across it. The velocity and volume of the water fluctuated with time, but Nahr el-Kalb was always considered a rough watercourse, to judge from the first name given to the river by Pliny the Elder: Lycos "the wolf."[39] Apparently this name was quite popular for watercourses in classical times, as the Pauly-Wissowa Encyclopedia records thirteen entries with this denomination for rivers and waterways.[40] We do not know what the river was called in Egyptian, Assyrian, Phoenician or Neo-Babylonian times. At some point in history, the wolf was tamed and became a dog, as in the case of Nahr ed-Dib ("River of the Wolf"), an affluent of the Tigris in Iraq, which is popularly known today as the Nahr el-Kilab or "River of the Dogs."[41] The legends regarding the name, the fury and the sonority of the watercourse are also associated with a stone statue of a dog, now lost, which according to local tradition had magical powers. Today, only what is presumed to be the pedestal of the statue is preserved.[42]

Legends and facts, military history and collective remembrance, macro-scale and micro-scale processes... the study of the site of Nahr el-Kalb from a long term diachronic perspective in the context of a critical archaeology of place is complex, yet enthralling and incredibly rewarding. The landscape is the product of a progressive process of human engagement through monument making and symbolic practices. Many of these practices have left no material remains, but we can reconstruct them on the basis of the archaeological evidence at our disposal if we analyse this evidence by applying unifying and critical approaches. From the above it is clear that Nahr el-Kalb is an ideal place to study the reception of monuments from a diachronic perspective, going beyond the single-period, single-focus culture and trying to enter the convoluted and entangled genealogy of places, as Harmanşah advocates in his recent book.[43] Many authors have called for the con-

[39] Maïla-Afeiche 2009: 56–60.
[40] Weissbach 1927: 2392–2393, the name Lycos is dealt with in pp. 2389–2417.
[41] Weissbach 1922: 6.
[42] Maïla-Afeiche 2009: 58–60.
[43] Harmanşah 2015.

struction of a theoretical edifice for understanding the relationship between the complex chronological framework of rock monuments, their geological and geomorphological aspects, and their ideological, social, and political implications at different social, temporal and historical moments. The best way to carry out this comprehensive analysis would be to combine a holistic, post-modern and post-processual archaeological approach with theoretical edifices from several social and humanistic disciplines and sub-disciplines, including aspects such as heritage studies, ethnography of landscapes, social memory, post-colonialism, political ecology, and cultural geography.

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